ward to the Don. The Communists, in their turn, received heavy reinforcements. The region became the main theater of the civil war and the scene of unbelievable atrocities.

Tiflis was full of refugees. We did not know which of their gruesome stories to believe. Then we met one eyewitness whom we had to trust. One evening someone knocked at our door. The visitor was a very tall, broad-shouldered man in a Caucasian Cossack uniform, with a colonel's shoulder straps and a high gray fur cap. Standing on the threshold, he saluted smartly. "May I enter, Mr. Commissar?" I could not remember having seen him before. "Colonel Artifaxov," he introduced himself. "The 54th Armored Division, the Twelfth Army, now liaison officer of the Volunteer Army, reports on the special assignment received in Gatchina."

Now I recognized him. My first day in Gatchina, the trains with the armored division had been stopped by the Reds some twenty miles from Gatchina and the echelon forced to unload. Major Artifaxov, sent to Gatchina for reconnaissance, came to Krasnov's headquarters. He believed he could bring the division to Gatchina by detour roads. I provided him with a road map and necessary papers. When Artifaxov returned to his outfit, however, the officers had been arrested and the tanks put out of commission. He was seized by the Reds but escaped, thanks to his exceptional physical strength. Later he joined the Volunteer Army. Because of his command of Caucasian languages—his wife was a Georgian—he was picked for a special mission to Tiflis. He chanced to hear I was there, and he came to report.

We sat at the table and had tea together; a soldier proud of his army and its chiefs, he told us about the Volunteers' marches and battles. Then his face became grim and he said with visible effort, "I know you do not see many things as we in the army do. That is why I want to ask you something, with your permission." I listened silently. "We took a village. The Reds fled. I came to the church. Its door stood wide open. I went in. In front of the altar lay dead men, their skulls shattered by butts, their brains blown out. Among them was the priest, an old man in a black cassock. The door of the altar was broken to bits. The altar itself was filthy and stinking; it had been used as a privy. Is this not a sacrilege?"

I nodded. He went on looking past me, as if speaking to himself. "A sacrilege! But across the green, in front of the church, was the house of the village council. A man had been nailed to the boards of the fence. Naked, dead, his hands and feet pierced by nails, as if crucified. His toes charred. The remains of a fire on the ground beneath him. And over his head a board with a single word scribbled in large letters: 'Commie.' Our men had done that. Russian, Christian men! Is that not also a sacrilege? What hope is left to us? . . ."